

Dinkey Collaborative

INAUGURAL MEETING SUMMARY – DECEMBER 1, 2010

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

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1. Overview

The Dinkey Collaborative held its inaugural meeting on December 1, 2010. Sierra National Forest leadership welcomed the group and presented a series of watershed restoration, aquatic wildlife, controlled burning, and mechanical thinning projects that it would like to work on through the Collaborative, and a corresponding work plan. Collaborative members shared several concerns, including the role of the Collaborative in projects that are already in or are nearing NEPA review, the need for a region-wide strategy, clarity on the terms “resistance” and “resilience,” and resources for prescribed burns.

The Forest presented a draft work plan describing when the Collaborative would engage each project, including the associated planning, NEPA, and monitoring activities. The group was reminded that the Forest chose many projects because fishers do not breed or reside in those areas. Collaborative members asked for greater detail in the work plan regarding their role, and expressed concern that better research and monitoring results were needed before conducting planning, while recognizing that the Forest had to meet established NEPA timelines. They also emphasized the need for members to have access to the detailed data used in analyses.

The facilitator reviewed a draft charter that included the Collaborative’s charge, membership, roles, and decision-making. Members had several comments, including on the project description, formalizing membership, stakeholder outreach, and advance meeting materials. In particular the group requested clarification of the use of sub-committees or technical work groups, and emphasized the need for the Forest to commit to likely implementing recommendations developed by the Collaborative.

The Forest reiterated its planning approach built around the NEPA triangle of planning, review, and monitoring. The Collaborative again expressed concern about their role in projects already in or nearing NEPA review, and how this would be characterized. The group also requested clarification of how scientific information would be used to aid decision-making, and the need for the Collaborative to review draft reports required by the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act.

Lastly the group discussed monitoring in general and a proposed LiDAR monitoring work plan. Members expressed concern about conducting planning before having monitoring information answer baseline questions, and requested clarification of how “multiparty monitoring” would involve the group in planning, budgeting, implementation, and analysis. The group also commented on a draft work plan and a recommended planning approach. Regarding the LiDAR proposal the group asked about ground-truthing data and the ability to accurately measure large snags and logs, and emphasized the need to develop an overarching framework that identifies key questions, what will be monitored and why, and the options available in addition to LiDAR.

2. Action Items

1. **All members are invited to submit additional comments on the draft Collaborative charter, Collaborative work plan, and LiDAR monitoring plan by close of business on Friday, December 17, 2010.**
 - Comments should be sent to the facilitator Dorian Fougères at fougeres@gmail.com
 - Comments already made at the December 1 meeting do not need to be resubmitted.
2. Staff will draft a protocol for sub-committee activities and integrating scientific information into collaborative deliberations.
3. **Cindy Whelan, SNF**, will investigate the structure of the other Forest Landscape Restoration Act projects to see how they handle membership and interested parties.

3. Presentation on Major Activities

Ray Porter, District Ranger, Sierra National Forest (SNF), welcomed people to the meeting, followed by Cindy Whelan, Forest Planner. Ramiro Rojas, District Silviculturalist, presented the major activities that the Forest Service seeks to develop and implement through the Dinkey Collaborative (download presentation slides here: [INSERT URL](#)). These included watershed restoration (including youth involvement), aquatic wildlife, controlled burning, and mechanical thinning projects. When applicable Ramiro noted where these projects were in the NEPA review process.

Individual members then made several comments and suggestions, including the following:

- It was suggested that the East Fork and Soaproot projects should not include commercial thinning, and this activity should be replaced with prescribed burning and snag creation.
- Concern was expressed that SNF seeks to implement these projects through the Collaborative, yet has developed several of projects before convening the group and obtaining their input.

- It was noted that these projects seem to be discrete activities, yet a regional restoration strategy will require integration. It was suggested that watershed restoration, for example, should be a component of any project.
 - Ramiro Rojas replied that analyzing the region as a whole is analytically very difficult, and also that a focus on individual projects did not exclude landscape work.
 - Gary Torres, Resource Staff Officer, emphasized the importance of developing a monitoring program to assess whether regional restoration objectives were being met.
 - Ray Porter affirmed that SNF shared the goal of landscape restoration, and flagged that the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project provides an opportunity to include ecological objectives in every project.
- Concern was expressed that the definition of “restoration” and “resilience” remain vague. It was felt that management often focuses on live tree structure and ignores snags, downed logs, and natural processes. Accordingly, it was suggested to consider the UNCED’s 2009 distinction between “engineered resilience” and “ecological resilience.”
- It was asked whether prescribed burns were limited by staffing availability (in addition to weather restrictions), and recommended that resources be allocated well enough in advance to support this work when it scales up.

4. Dinkey Collaborative Work Plan

Ramiro Rojas introduced a draft work plan that proposed when the Collaborative would engage each project, including the associated planning, NEPA, and monitoring activities. Ramiro explained that the work plan was a living document that set out some major dates for activities but would have to be fine-tuned as time passed. The NEPA column refers to months when an activity will occur, and does not correspond to Dinkey Collaborative meeting dates. The work plan highlighted key meeting topics, but meetings would not be limited to these. Discussion followed.

- Ramiro Rojas reminded everyone that many of the projects were chosen because fishers do not breed or reside in those areas, consistent with earlier planning forum discussions.
- Concern was expressed that research and monitoring results are needed before planning can be done. Similar concern was expressed that project descriptions could hence be premature.
 - Other Forest Landscape Restoration Act funded initiatives had completed their planning work while many of the Dinkey projects have not completed their NEPA review. This provides an opportunity for the Collaborative to help develop projects, but also makes the Collaborative’s work harder.
 - Cindy Whelan, Forest Planner, noted that the Collaborative’s work in 2011 would be intensive. She explained that this corresponded to the restoration strategy developed as part of the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project proposal.

- Similarly, tension was noted between having the Collaborative help develop projects, on the one hand, and SNF having to meet established NEPA timelines, on the other.
- It was suggested that the charter and work plan more clearly explain
 - where projects are in development, what has been done and by who
 - when and how the Collaborative will be asked to provide meaningful input
 - when materials are ready for public review
- Concern was expressed about members getting up to speed on projects that are already well-developed, and having the same amount of information for analysis as SNF staff. The work plan must include analysis and review far enough in advance of deadlines to make participation meaningful.
- It was also emphasized that members must get materials for individual meetings one to two weeks in advance. Transparency and accessibility are critical.
 - A wiki could be set up to easily track and download documents.
- Cindy Whelan suggested that the Collaborative include at each meeting some way for members people to easily get updated on the status, progress, and immediate needs of different projects.

All members are invited to submit additional comments on the draft work plan by close of business on Friday, December 17, 2010. Comments should be sent to the facilitator Dorian Fougères at dfougeres@ccp.csus.edu. Feedback will be incorporated into future versions of the work plan.

5. Dinkey Collaborative Charter

The facilitator Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS, walked the group through their draft charter. Several comments were made:

Section 1, Introduction

- It was felt that the sentence identifying particular treatments for specific acreage was premature. It was suggested to remove this sentence because the Collaborative had not yet had a chance to review and help develop the different projects.

Section 4, Membership

- It was noted that the Resource Conservation District was part of county government.
- For technical advisors, it was suggested to add fire specialists, hydrologists, and meadow restoration specialists.
 - Ray Porter affirmed that SNF would ensure that any necessary experts were available to support the group at their meetings. Exact staffing would depend on the agenda. Listing all possible experts was not needed in the charter.
- Cold Springs Rancheria will determine whether they had adequate funding to participate regularly, and whether the Department of the Interior could support their involvement.

- It was suggested to add Martha Conklin, Sierra Nevada Research Institute, because of her work on the Kings River Experimental Watershed Area, located in the middle of the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project.
- *See also section 8, Stakeholder Outreach and Communication, and section 9, Decision-making*

Section 6, Roles and Responsibilities

- It was suggested to add that staff must commit to getting materials out well in advance of meetings, and that members must commit to reviewing materials in advance of meetings.

Section 7, Sub-Committees and Technical Work Groups

- It was emphasized that a clear process needs to be established for developing sub-committees, tracking their activities, ensuring transparency, and sharing their work with the full Collaborative. Sub-committee meetings will be open to the public.
- It was suggested that:
 - the full Collaborative identify needed sub-committees
 - members self-select to join the sub-committee if they have the passion, time, resources, and expertise needed to do intensive work
 - SNF provide technical support as needed
 - SNF's lead staffer for the Collaborative convene and coordinate the sub-committees work, and serve as a liaison to SNF technical staff
- Sub-committees will need balanced representation of different interests.
- The work plan could identify when sub-committees bring products back to the full Collaborative for review and discussion.

Section 8, Stakeholder Outreach and Communication

- Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Mandy Vance requested that SNF brief the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative on the Dinkey Collaborative's work.
- The February 17 meeting date conflicts with the Sierra Tribal Forum meeting at the Supervisor's Office on the same day and should be revisited.
- An "Interested Parties" list could be developed for people who wanted to receive information and track the Collaborative's work, but not be directly involved.
- It was asked whether membership would be allowed to expand over time as outreach continued.
 - It was noted that Collaborative meetings were public, and it was likely that the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) would require the Collaborative's membership to remain open.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Cindy Whelan, SNF, will investigate the structure of the other Forest Landscape Restoration Act projects to see how they handle membership and interested parties.
 - *See also section 9, Decision-making*
- It was requested that the Collaborative periodically develop short, high-level summaries or briefing notes of their activities for use at the Sierra Tribal Forum and related venues.

Section 9, Decision-Making within the Dinkey Collaborative

- It was noted that sub-committees would also use a consensus-seeking approach.
- It was felt that SNF needed to make a strong commitment that recommendations developed by the Collaborative are likely to be implemented.
- In parallel it was suggested that membership should be formalized as much as possible within the scope of FACA, to ensure that the group could work efficiently, establish a common foundation, and hence make more influential recommendations to SNF.

All members are invited to submit additional comments on the draft charter by close of business on Friday, December 17, 2010. Comments should be sent to the facilitator Dorian Fougères at fougeres@gmail.com. The facilitator will incorporate feedback as needed and share a revised charter at the next meeting on January 20, 2011.

6. Collaborative Planning Process (Charter Section 11)

Cindy Whelan reviewed the NEPA triangle of planning, NEPA activities and monitoring with the group. Gina Bartlett, Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS, reviewed a list of insights regarding the collaborative planning process used for the earlier Dinkey North and South Project. Members who participated in that process were invited to comment and add additional insights. For clarification, the Kings River Experimental Watershed Project (KREW) is not part of the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project.

- It was noted that site visits help to visualize the issues being discussed and make it easier to reach agreement.
- It was noted that the mediator helped the group build trust over a six month period. The group operated with a high degree of transparency and professionalism, which also helped the group to reach agreement.

The group then reviewed charter section 11 on collaborative planning.

- Concern was expressed that projects in NEPA review could be characterized as being supported by the Collaborative even though the Collaborative had no input on their design. It was emphasized that the role and contributions of the Collaborative to different projects needs to be clearly explained in public documents.
 - It was clarified that members of the Collaborative always retain their right to comment as individuals on projects that are already in NEPA review, for example, Snowy Patterson.
 - It was reiterated that the projects being discussed were identified in the restoration strategy developed as part of the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project proposal.
- It was suggested that reference to “the work of the Dinkey North and South Project” should either be deleted, or be clarified to indicate the planning approach, not the technical substance of the project.
 - It was agreed that pertinent insights should be listed in the text of the charter to further clarify the approach.

- A process needs to be established for sharing and reviewing the best available information, and making decisions in the face of scientific uncertainty.
- With regard to reporting
 - It was suggested to clarify that the reports mentioned are required by the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act.
 - It was emphasized that if the reports discussed the work of the Collaborative then Collaborative members must have the opportunity to review and comment on drafts, as well as see the final reports.
 - It was suggested that the Collaborative Work Plan include the review and finalization of reports.
 - Cindy Whelan invited the Collaborative to provide draft language and material for the reports.

The group also had several concerns about monitoring.

- Concern was expressed that planning would take place before many of the baseline questions would be better answered through monitoring, including questions about other species of significant concern and “characteristic wildfire.”
- Concern was expressed that the Collaborative should be more directly involved in project planning and budgeting. In particular it was felt that the project must ensure that the monitoring program has adequate resources to meet the numerous technical needs.
- “Multipart monitoring” as referenced in the Forest Landscape Restoration Act should also be mentioned in the charter. Further clarity is needed on what this involves, for example, the role of different partners in the design, implementation, and analysis phases.
- A process needs to be established for vetting the work of a monitoring sub-committee.

7. LiDAR Monitoring Proposal

Marc Meyer, Southern Sierra Nevada Province Ecologist, USDA Forest Service, presented the use of LiDAR as a monitoring technology, and a draft work plan for further LiDAR monitoring efforts (download presentation slides here: [INSERT URL](#)). Pre-treatment data for the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project was obtained in October as part of a larger project on the Kern Plateau. Marc then posed three questions for the group:

1. Before spring 2011, the group needs to decide: is additional pre-treatment data collection in the DLRP warranted, and if so where and with what partners?
2. By spring, what are the LiDAR-derived vegetation metrics for pre- and post-treatment analyses, and which of these are priorities?
3. In the next 3-5 years, what LiDAR data should be collected in the different areas during post-treatment, and when should it be acquired?

Discussion followed.

- It was asked what the Forest Service Remote Sensing Laboratory (RSL) would do with the data, when it would come back to Sierra National Forest, and how it would be ground-truthed.
 - Marc explained that the contractor will review the data to provide quality assurance, which will then be provided to the RSL for translation into a GIS database. Ground-truthing is needed yet difficult, particularly in dense canopies, because it requires sub-meter accuracy. It is likely that a few dozen data plots will need to be assessed, and the LiDAR interpreted in concert with these.
- It was asked whether there were metrics that LiDAR could not effectively measure, for example, medium and large snags and large log structure.
 - Marc explained that this remains unclear. The possibility is definitely there, a study in Idaho identified snags with around 80% accuracy, but it is hard in dense canopies.
- It was suggested that the Collaborative needs to develop an overarching framework for the monitoring program that identifies the questions to be answered, what is being monitored for and why (e.g., other sensitive species, disturbance processes, hydrologic processes), clear objectives, what elements of this LiDAR can cover, and what other options (and their associated costs) are available.
 - Marc noted that some LiDAR costs can be partially offset by partnering with other agencies or organizations.
 - It was suggested that the broader monitoring framework be a central part of the agenda for the Collaborative's next meeting on January 20, 2011.

All members are invited to submit additional comments on the draft LiDAR work plan by close of business on Friday, December 17, 2010. Comments should be sent to the facilitator Dorian Fougères at fougeres@gmail.com. Feedback will be incorporated into subsequent monitoring work products.

8. Attendance

#	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1	Susan Britting	Sierra Forest Legacy
2	Stephen Byrd	Southern California Edison
3	Kent Duysen	Terra Bella Mill
4	Larry Duysen	Terra Bella Mill
5	Chad Hanson	John Muir Project
6	Rich Kangas	Sierra Club
7	Ray Laclergue	Intermountain Nursery
8	Matt Meadows	Sierra Nevada Research Institute
9	John Mount	Southern California Edison
10	James Oftedal	Central California Consortium
11	Terry Sandridge	Sierra Resource Conservation District
12	Eric Smith	Cold Springs Rancheria
13	Julianne Stewart	Southern California Edison
14	Craig Thomas	Sierra Forest Legacy
15	Mandy Vance	Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative

DRAFT DOCUMENT FOR REVIEW

#	NAME	ORGANIZATION
16	Stan Van Velsor	The Wilderness Society
17	Frank Aebly	Sierra National Forest
18	Stephanie Barnes	Sierra National Forest
19	Pam Bierce	Sierra National Forest
20	Darcy Brown	Sierra National Forest
21	Nevia Brown	Sierra National Forest
22	Dirk Charley	Sierra National Forest
23	Julie Gott	Sierra National Forest
24	Mosé Jones-Yellin	Sierra National Forest
25	Doug McKay	Sierra National Forest
26	Marc Meyer	USDA Forest Service
27	Ray Porter	Sierra National Forest
28	Ramiro Rojas	Sierra National Forest
29	Greg Schroer	Sierra National Forest
30	Judi Tapia	Sierra National Forest
31	Zachary Tane	Sierra National Forest
32	Craig Thompson	Sierra National Forest
33	Gary Torres	Sierra National Forest
34	Cindy Whelan	Sierra National Forest
35	Chor Yang	Sierra National Forest
36	Gina Bartlett	Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS
37	Dorian Fougères	Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS